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Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 05627 061516Z

47
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 COME-00 DOTE-00 EB-07 FMC-01 CG-00 OFA-01

DLOS-03 SAM-01 SAB-01 TRSE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-05 IO-10

/098 W
---------- 078420
R 061345Z JUN 75
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4391
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PFOR EG
SUBJECT: THE THEME WAS PEACE: SUEZ CANAL REOPENS

REF: A. CAIRO 5555; B. CAIRO 5593

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1. SUEZ CANAL REOPENED JUNE 5 AMID JUBILANT CROWDS, SHORT, SIMPLE

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CANAL-SIDE CEREMONY AND BILLBOARDS AND PLACARDS PROCLAIMING THAT FIRST STEPS TOWARDS PEACE HAD BEGUN. SLOGANS SUCH AS " THE CANAL HAS REOPENED; IT WILL NOW REMAIN OPEN" AND DRAWINGS OF DOVES APPEARED ON BILLBOARDS LINING CANAL AND ENTRIES TO SUEZ CANAL CITIES. EMPHASIS ON PROSPECTS FOR PEACE CARRIED THROUGH PRES SADAT'S SPEECH, PRESS CONFERENCE AND INTERVIEWS, BUT WITH THE REMINDER THAT PEACE WOULD BE AT HAND ONLY ONCE ALL OCCUPIED ARAB LANDS WERE RETURNED AND RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS RESTORED.

2. CANAL REOPENING CEREMONY STARTED AT 1030 WITH READING FROM KORAN, FOLLOWED BY FIVE-MINUTE SPEECH BY DEP PM/MINWAR GENERAL GAMASSY IN WHICH HE ANNOUNCED RELEASE OF CANAL FROM MILITARY AUTHORITY AND ITS RETURN TO CIVILIAN CONTROL AS OF 1100 JUNE 5. GAMASSY NOTED IN HIS SPEECH THAT MILITARY NEVERTHELESS RETAINED RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEFENSE OF CANAL, SHOULD IT COME UNDER ATTACK. PRESIDENTIAL DECREE SIGNED BY PRESIDENT AND PRESENTED TO SUEZ CANAL AUTHORITY (SCA) CHAIRMAN MASHHUR AHMAD MASHHUR. SADAT, DRESSED IN NAVY UNIFORM, FOLLOWED THIS WITH SHORT SPEECH (REF A) BEFORE PROCEEDING TO DESTOYER FOR TRIP DOWN CANAL. SADAT AND OFFICIAL PARTY, INCLUDING IRANIAN CROWN PRINCE, VP MUBARAK, PM SALIM AND DEP PM/MINWAR GAMASSY PARTICIPATED IN CANAL-SIDE CEREMONY IN SPECIAL STAND ERECTED IN FRONT OF SCA BUILDING IN PORT SAID.

3. PRESIDENTAL CONVOY, LED BY DESTROYER "OCTOBER 6", LAUNCHED AT NOON WITH 21-GUN SALUTE. "OCTOBER 6" WAS FOLLOWED BY PRESIDENTIAL YACHT "HURIYYA", (FORMER "MAHRUSA") "LITTLE ROCK" AND PASSENGER SHIPS "SYRIA DN "AIDA". DISTRIBUTED AMONGST VARIOUS VESSELS WERE SPEAKER AND DEPUTY SPEAKERS OF PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY, ASU FIRST SECRETARY MAHGUB, DEP PM'S, MINISTERS, ARAB MINISTERS OF DEFENSE, FOREIGN AMBASSADORS AND MILITARY ATTACHES, MILITARY COMMANDERS OF COUNTRIES WHO HAD CONTRIBUTED TO CLEARING OF CANAL (INCLUDING ADMIRALS CARROLL AND MCCAULEY), REPS OF TRADE AND NAVIGATIONAL FIRMS, OTHER HONORED GUESTS AND 30 MEMBERS OF PRESS. AMONG GUESTS WERE COUNTESS DE LESSEPS, GRANDDAUGHTER OF FERDINAND DE LESSEPS.

4. "LITTLE ROCK", DUBBED "USS SURPRISE" BY ANNOYED SOVIET MILITARY ATTACHE, WAS TOP ITEM OF CONVERSATION DURING SIX-HOUR TRIP FROM PORT SAID TO ISMAILIA, AS REPORTED REF B. BLOC AMBAS-SADORS AND MILITARY ATTACHES HELD HURRIED MEETING AFTER "LITTLE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

ROCK" FIRST APPEARED AND APPARENTLY DECIDED MAINTAIN "NO COMMENT" LINE WITH PRESS. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH OTHER AMBASSADORS AND ATTACHES, HOWEVER, THEIR CRITICISMS WERE UNSTILLED AND CAST AS US EFFORT UPSTAGE THEM. LONDON TIMES CORRESPONDENT LATER TOLD PAO THAT BRITISH COMMUNITY "TOTALLY DISMAYED" OVER "LITTLE ROCK'S" PROMINENT APPEARANCE IN CANAL CEREMONIES (ALTHOUGH AMB HAD BRIEFED UK AMB ABOUT IT PREVIOUS EVENING). LOCAL PRESS PLAYING STORY IN VERY LOW KEY MANNER. ONLY GUMHURIYYA OF ARABIC PRESS

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AND EGYPTIAN GAZETTE OF FOREIGN PRESS CARRY BRIEF ITEMS JUNE 6
NOTING "LITTLE ROCK'S" PARTICIPATION.

5. DURING TRANSIT TO ISMAILIA, PRES SADAT HELD PRESS CONFERENCE
ABOARD "OCTOBER 6". HE NOTED THAT HIS FEELINGS WERE OF "EXTREME
REJOICING, COUPLED WITH EXTREME VIGILANCE", ADDING THAT REOPENING
OF CANAL PROVES TO WORLD THAT EGYPT DOES NOT DREAD PEACE. REMARKING
ON ISRAELI PULLBACK DECISION, SADAT CALLED IT "EXPRESSION OF DESIRE
ON
THEIR PART NOT TO MISS OPPORTUNITY OF JOINING THE CONVOY TOWARDS
PEACE THAT IS LED BY THE ARABS AT THIS STATE." HE ADDED THAT THIS
"SHOULD NOT BE A MERE GESTURE ON THEIR PART, BUT SHOULD REVEAL
GENUINE DESIRE FOR PEACE".

6. IN SUBSEQUENT INTERVIEW WITH EGYPTIAN NEWSPAPERS EDITORS,
SADAT, IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION, REITERATED GOE PUBLIC POSITION
ON PASSAGE OF ISRAELI SHIPS AND CARGOES THROUGH CANAL. PASSAGE
OF SHIPS, HE SAID, WOULD BE CONSIDERED ONLY IN CONTEXT OF COMPRE-
HENSIVE PEACE SETTLEMENT. PASSAGE OF CARGOES DEPENDED ON "ISRAELI
BEHAVIOR", THAT IS, WHETHER OR NOT ISRAEL WILL CONTINUE PEACE EFFORTS
AND NOT RETURN TO "STAGNANT ATTITUDE WHICH LED TO FAILURE OF
KISSINGER
MISSION". HE CALLED RECENT ISRAELI ACTION"ENCOURAGING INITIATIVE"
AND SAID HE "APPRECIATED ITS SIGNIFICANCE", BUT ADDED IN LATER INTER-
VIEW WITH TIME CORRESPONDENT WILTON WYNN THAT HE HOPED IT WAS NOT
"A MERE TACTICAL MOVE".

7. INTHIRD INTERVIEW ABOARD "OCTOBER 6", SADAT TOLD LEBANESE
JOURNALIST THAT HE WAS PREPARED TRAVEL TO BEIRUT TO HELP WORK OUT
AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN PRESIDENT FRANJIEH AND PLO CHAIRMAN
ARAFAT TO STOP BLOODSHED THERE. ON SEPARATE INTRA-ARAB SUBJECT,
SADAT EXPRESSED HIS PLEASURE OVER SUCCESS OF SAUDI MEDIATION EFFORTS
IN SYRIA/IRAQ WATER DISPUTE. ON SOVIET/LIBYAN ARMS DEAL, SADAT
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COMMENTED THAT ANY WEAPON IN HANDS OF AN ARAB BENEFITED OTHER
ARABS, EXCEPT IN QADHAAFI'S CASE, PARTICULARLY AFTER HE WITHDREW
HIS MIRAGES FROM BATTLE IN MIDDLE OF OCTOBER WAR. SADAT AGAIN
COMPLAINED THAT EGYPT HAD NOT RECEIVED WEAPONS TO COMPENSATE
EVEN FOR THOSE SHE HAD LOST AND WONDERED WHY SOVIETS HAD CONCLUDED
AGREEMENT FOR SALE OF SOPHISTICATED ARMS TO LIBYA, KNOWING WHAT
SOVIETS THINK OF COL. QADHAFFI. (LOCAL PRESS JUNE 6 NOTES THAT
LIBYA WAS ONLY COUNTRY IN WORLD THAT "EXPRESSED DISSATISFACTION"
WITH CANAL REOPENING).

8. PRESS REPORTS JUNE 6 THAT FIVE MERCHANT VESSELS LED BY KUWAITI
SHIP TRANSITED CANAL SOUTHBOUND JUNE 5 CLOSE BEHIND PRESIDENTIAL
CONVOY. MERCHANT CONVOY WAS FOLLOWED BY THREE SMALL SHIPS FLYING
FLAGS OF QATAR AND TWO OF OMAN. FIRST NORTHBOUND MERCHANT CONVOY
DUE PASS THROUGH CANAL JUNE 6. PRESS REPORTS THAT 60 VESSELS

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WAITING AT NORTHERN ENTRANCE AND 30 AT SOUTHERN. AMONG THOSE
MERCHANT VESSELS SIGHTED AT PORT SAID WERE EIGHT SOVIET, TWO
YUGOSLAV AND ONE POLISH.
EILTS

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